# *Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia College*

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Punjab's crowning glory:

# *Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia College*

In 1856, when there was no major centre of learning in North India and when education in the region was mostly imparted by religious priests, the Kapurthala Royal family, under the patronage of the British, established the oldest centre of learning in the North — Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia College or the erstwhile Randhir College. Tribune Correspondent Aparna Banerji and photographer Malkiat Singh take a trip down memory lane in the annals of Kapurthala's glorious educational history.

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Established in 1856 as Randhir School, a Sanskrit Vidyalaya, Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia College was a premier seat of learning in the undivided Punjab and is the oldest surviving educational institute in North India. It was set up on a sprawling 33 acres by Raja Randhir Singh, the ruler of then princely state of Kapurthala.

Imposing Jagatjit Jubilee Hall of NJSA College stands in the middle of sprawling lawns.

**Colonial-era architecture**

The Jubilee Hall's imposing facade has three towers that are topped with weather vanes, including one for protection against lightning and thunderstorms. The red and white building features colonial arches, wide verandahs, round windows and magnificently carved entrance door bearing the royal insignia. Presently, in a dilapidated condition, the

building which has hosted royal durbars and conferences, cries for repairs. Marked by colonial arches and verandahs, the U-block also features sterling architecture.

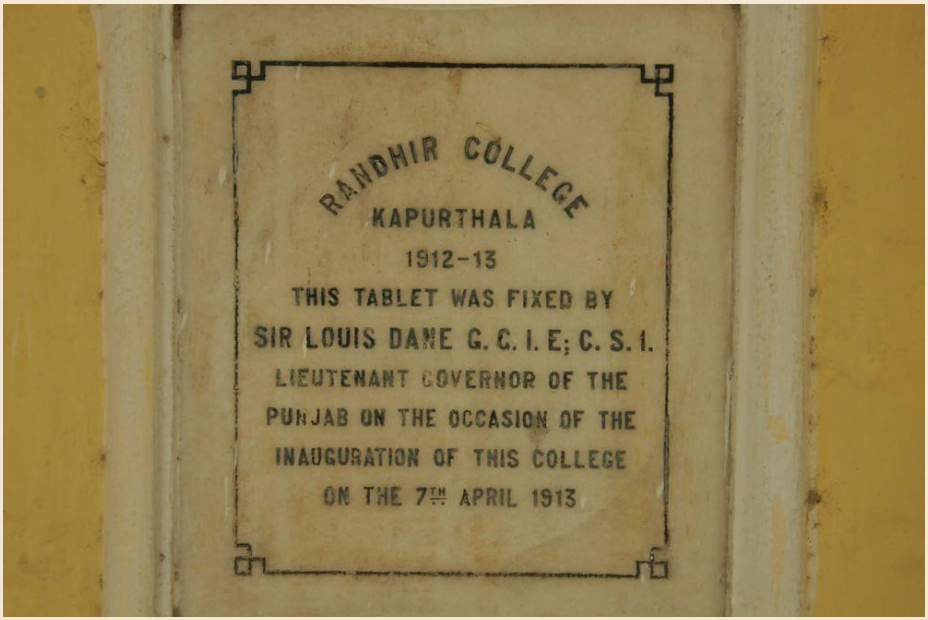
The Jubilee Hall's splendid facade is topped with three towers having weather vanes.

The college predates all other noted institutions of learning in undivided North India with the exception of Edwards College, Peshawar (established in 1855). The Government Mohindra College, Patiala (1870), and Khalsa College, Amritsar (1893), had not been established then and the Government College, Lahore, and Foreman Christian College, Lahore, were also established only later - in 1864 and 1866, respectively. The 167-year-old institution — later christened as Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia College in 1978 — is a rare Punjab gem, which is, unfortunately, lesser known in the present Punjab.

The central vane was a lightning vane built for protection against lightning and thunderstorms.

**History**

In 1857, three universities were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras under the Woods Dispatch of 1854 in British India. New centres of education followed across the country under the newly introduced modern education system and the Kapurthala princely state in turn established its own centre. It began as a high school in 1856 and in 1877 it was affiliated to Calcutta University. In 1896, the school was raised to the level of an intermediate arts college and, subsequently, to a degree college in 1945.


RANDHIR COLLEGE
KAPURTHALA
1912-13
THIS TABLET WAS FIXED BY
SIR LOUIS DANE G. C. I. E; C. S. I.
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE
PUNJAB ON THE OCCASION OF THE
INAUGURATION OF THIS COLLEGE
ON THE 7TH APRIL 1913
A tablet of the college inauguration was fixed on April 7, 1913.

It was recognised by Panjab University in 1906. The subjects taught included English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, history, philosophy, economics, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, French, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi. It was the first Punjab college to tutor pupils in foreign languages.

A weather vane atop the Jubilee Hall at the NJSA College.

A 200-year-old peepal tree — famous for hosting the first classes under it in the guru-shishya parampara — still stands tall on the college lawns.

The entrance to the college, which was established in 1856.

**Present day**

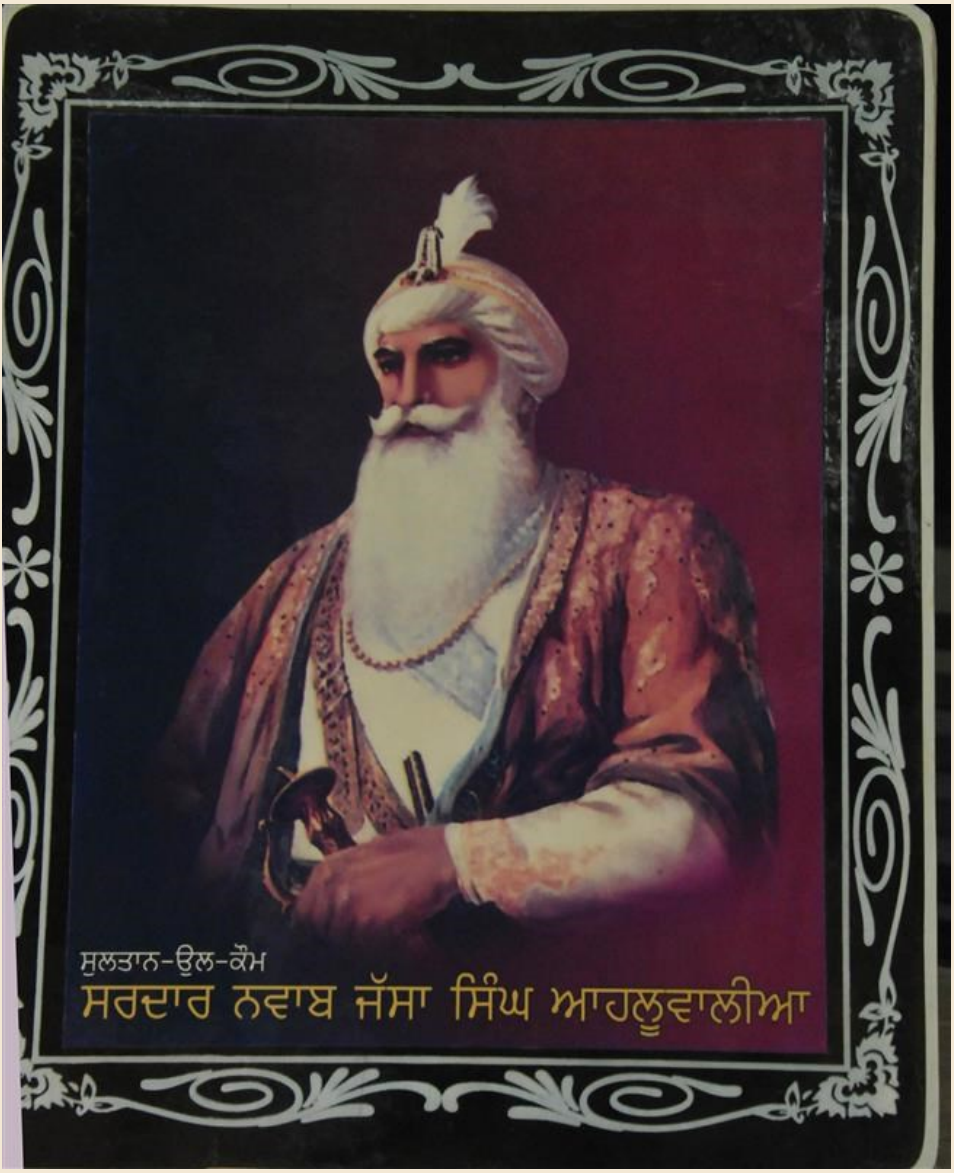
A magnificent vista lined with Ashoka and palm trees ushers one into a verdant campus with imposing colonial buildings. All historic buildings of the college — including the oldest U-block and the towering Jagatjit Jubilee Hall — are red. The U-block, which is the main building, comprises an administrative hall, library, science block, chemistry and commerce blocks, bio lab, English department, basketball court, gym, botanical gardens and a vermicomposting unit.

Science Park on the premises of the college.

The current student strength of the college is 1,081. It also boasts of being one of the government colleges charging the lowest fee in the region.

The interiors of the Jubilee Hall. The cream and white interiors which have hosted durbars and royal parties now cry for repairs.

Former foreign minister S Swarn Singh, poet Surjit Patar, Arjuna awardee Sajjan Singh Cheema, former Pakistan governor Ghulam Mohammed, sportsperson Mubarak Ali and many more are on the glorious list of alumni.



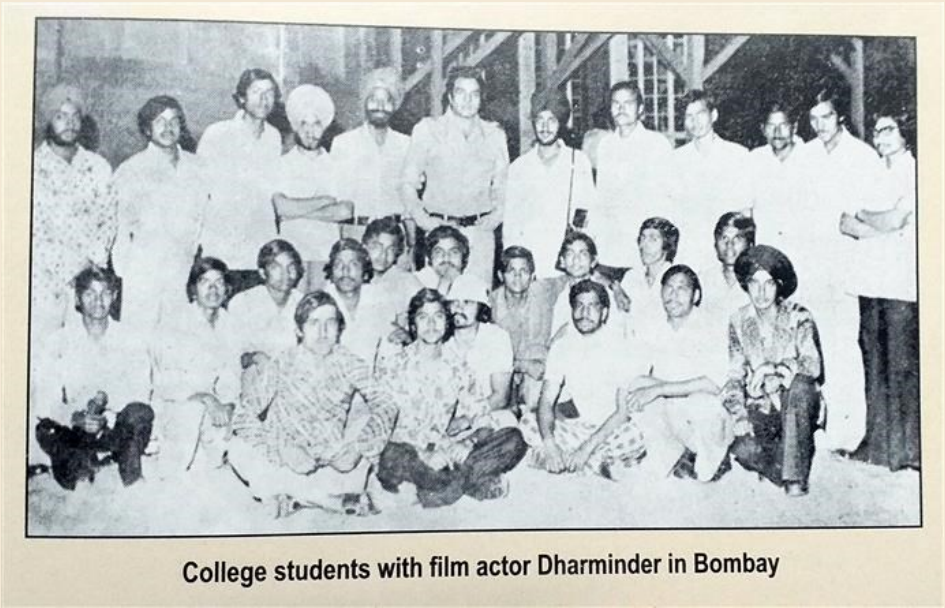

A portrait of Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, founder of princely state of Kapurthala on whose name NJSA College is named.

Principal Tirath Singh Basra says: “We are proud to uphold the legacy of one of Northern India’s oldest and most premiere institutes of learning. It is older than existing Punjab colleges and our aim is to uphold the legacy of the seat of education envisioned by its founders.”

Portraits of the previous principals of Randhir College adorn the present Principal’s office.

Acknowledgements: ‘150 years of Glory NJSA College’ by Dr Bikram Singh Virk & ‘Kapurthala State and Its Rulers’ by Chander Kanta

An old building of Randhir School just adjoining the NJSA College building in Kapurthala.



College students with film actor Dharminder in Bombay

College students pose for a photograph with Bollywood actor Dharmendra in Bombay.

Dr. J.S. Grewal Vice Chancellor GNDU, Amritsar being welcomed as chief guest by the college staff & students.

Then GNDU Vice-Chancellor JS Grewal being welcomed by college staff and students.